

## **Our Views: Report cases of abuse, neglect**

***The Olympian, Opinion* Tuesday, March 19, 2002**

Recent headlines in East Coast newspapers have focused on the sexual abuse of children by church leaders. At the same time, Congress has begun hearings on nursing home abuse.

Much of the abuse went unreported for years.

Washington state is not immune from cases of abuse and neglect.

The Department of Social and Health Services investigated 8,200 reports of abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults from March 2000 to March 2001.

In calendar year 2000, DSHS found more than 58,000 children who were abused or neglected.

It's important for Washington state residents to know that there is a toll-free hot line to report cases of child abuse or suspected neglect or abuse of vulnerable adults.

The number is 1-866-363-4276 (1-866-ENDHARM.) Operators will refer callers -- 24 hours a day -- to the appropriate DSHS office so an abuse report can be taken.

If a child or an adult is in danger, callers should dial 9-1-1 immediately.

Every one of us has an obligation to protect children and vulnerable adults by reporting cases of suspected abuse and neglect.